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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

25X1A2g

REPORT NO.

CD NO.

COUNTRY Austria

DATE DISTR. 16 May 1949

SUBJECT Plans for Communist-Inspired Demonstration

NO. OF PAGES 2

PLACE 25X1A6a
ACQUIRED 

NO. OF ENCLS.
(LISTED BELOW)

25X1A2g

DATE OF INFO: 10/10/68

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

25X1X6

~~22 MAY 1976~~

1. During the past month, the Austrian Communist Party has been attempting to organize groups of activists in sections and in plants. The main purpose has not been to recruit members, but to seize every opportunity to exploit public dissatisfaction, and to organize protest actions on a non-Party basis. Party leaders have not been satisfied with activist group results, and have tried to promote "contact committees" within such non-Communist organizations as the Trade Union Youth. These committees were to work with activists on matters of general interest to workers, including protests against the cost of living, etc. This plan failed.
2. In early April, Austrian Communist Party officials began to talk of a projected series of meetings and strikes in Vienna plants against the occupation cost tax and the cost of living. Minor sporadic agitation did occur, but no strikes, and agitation was very weak. Activists played only a minor role in the May Day parade.
3. After May Day, activists were alerted for demonstrations against the meat shortage and high prices, but the announcement of new price-wage negotiations on 9 May gave a better target. Instructions for the demonstration on 10 May were issued by the Central Committee to District Headquarters (Bezirksleitungen) on 7 May.
4. Indications are that the Central Committee views the 10 May affair as a rehearsal for a larger demonstration and possibly a general strike. Activists were instructed to carry out a mass demonstration on 11 May, but this was cancelled at the last minute because of bad weather. The Volksstimme announces that this demonstration will now take place at 1800 hours on 17 May in front of Parliament. Meantime the Communists have been frantically trying to whip up opposition to the price-wage agreement with meetings, posters, and speeches. The 17 May performance will aim at appearing to be a popular protest, and not purely a Communist demonstration. Plain red flags with no insignia will be carried, and the Austrian Communist Party will not be identified as the instigator. No instructions for violence have been given, and activists have been warned against Socialist provocateurs who might attempt to stir up trouble. However, Michael Kesselbauer, the leader of the Second District organization, told activists to tear off the badges of police who attempt to interfere, and to turn the badges in to the District Headquarters. Kesselbauer said that

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Approved For Release 1999/09/09 : CIA-RDP82-00070R002700170007

Next Review Date: 2008

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positive identification this way would serve as deterrent to the police.

5. Members of the Anti-Fascist Freedom Fighters (Verband Anti-Faschistischer Freiheitskämpfer) will accompany the demonstrators on 17 May to keep peace and to prevent Socialist interference.
6. Details of the organization for the demonstrations are not fully known, but lateral communications between activist groups exist, in addition to a direct channel down from the Central Committee. Individual activists are alerted at their place of work by phone from their Section. They report directly to Section Headquarters.

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